Helter Skelter

The North East Rock Magazine

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40p cheap !

THE HUMAN LEAGUE

CHELSEA PHIL LYNOTT HEAVY METAL

HELTER SKELTER

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EVERYBODY BUT
SPECIAL MENTION
FOR T.H. BOGART.

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'MOONBEAT' BY CHRIS OF VIZ!

Welcome back to the magazine that makes the Beano look like the Sunday Times. Yes, it's Helter Skelter time, kiddies, and aren't you glad! (Well, AREN'T you?)

I'm pleased to report that quite a number of local bands have sent me tapes of their meisterwerks (honestly, some were really good!) and this is all to the good as our third issue is to feature a massive, in-depth look at the local scene. So, if you wanna be featured just send a tape and/or letter and we'll see what can be done.

This issue features interviews with Gene October of Chelsea, Lizzy's Phil Lynott, T'Uman League, lad, as well as T.H. Bogarts glimpse at Heavy Metal and Mick's feature on The Sutherlands.

It's always nice to receive letters, too, so if there's anybody out there who feels they've gd something to say and no outlet to say it, then get in touch.

See you soon,

Mal Armstrong

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PHILIP LYNOTT:

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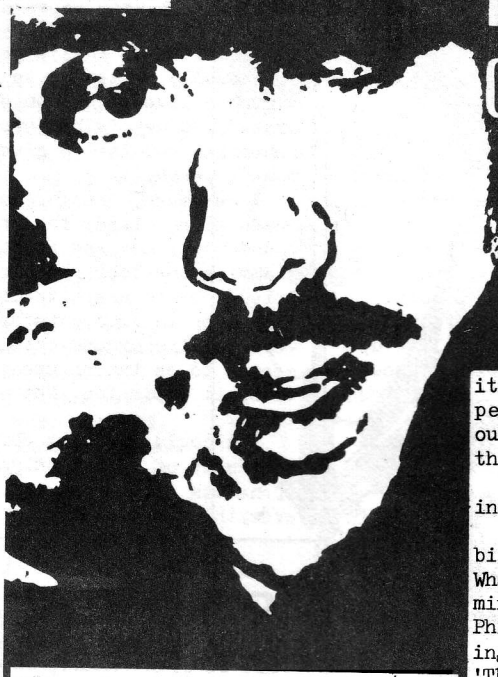

Thin Lizzy have never been of massive importance or influence to me, so meeting Phil Lynott was a rather strange experience for this particular newshound. Oh yeah, I've heard all the singles, and yeah, I saw Lizzy years ago with the Eric Bell line up and was impressed, but in a nutshell, I was aware of Thin Lizzy but not involved.

I also Knew of Lizzy's much vaunted inter-group wrangles. Eric Bell left because he couldn't stand the pace; Gary Moore left to follow up his own guitar-hero ambitions; Brian Robertson left because he was getting pissed too much. Gary Moore left once again mid-tour in the states, and Lizzy now have one Snowy White on guitar, he late of stints with Pink Floyd and Cliff Richard. From chatting to Phil I learned that Snowy is well on the way to becoming an integral part of 'yor aud T'in Lizzy' but more of this later.

The following interview began when yours truly blagged his merry way into the backstage area of Newcastle City Hall at soundcheck time. Soundcheck ends, Phil ambles off to the dressing room in a pair of stunning purple suede cuban-heels, and I confidently inform him of his forthcoming grilling. With that out of the way, we stride manfully to the farthest corner of the empty dressing room. This emerged:

Helter Skelter: I want to ask about your writing, Phil. What inspires you to put pen to paper?

Lynott: "Don't know. The smallest thing can get me going. Like that Marjorie Proops thing got me on 'Dear Miss Lonely Hearts'... Reading Marj Proops letters. Giovanni, we gonna have some tea?"

Giovanni: "She's cooking the fish now."

Phil: "What is it?"

Giovanni: "Fish and chips!"

Phil: "Bread and butter? Say no more!"

HS: Well..er...

By this time a few roadies, management types, hangers on and other interested parties have entered the dressing room and are surrounding Phil and myself. Suddenly I get the feeling that everyone in the room knows everyone else and that I'm the only stranger in the company.

Paranoia sets into your devil-may-care reporter. Phil is the centre of all conversation. The rest of the group drift in while a cheery Cockney dude selling sew-on patches asks Phil how much he thinks they should be sold for. The dude thinks they should go for a pound but Phil thinks It should be less than that. Scott Gorham - son of an American millionaire, no less - chips in with "Yeah, a pound? It's worth it! Make it TWO pounds!" (American free enterprise at work, folks!) The dude says that it's taken him three years to perfect a woven patch that washes out. Everyone laughs and Phil and the dude agree on 90p.

I attempt to continue the interview.

HS: You're rumoured to be a bit of a literary character. What are you reading at the minute?

Phil: "Well, I'm not really reading anything at the min...Oh! 'The Lemonade Drinker'was the last thing that was holding me. Giovanni told me about the Kray twins book and I was thinking of reading that. What's that you're reading, Giovanni?"

Giovanni: "Marx Brothers:'Harpo Speaks'."

Phil: "But I've been through all the Irish writers, if that's what you're after. You go through that as a kid."

HS: Yes?..

Phil: "I love all those Irish lyricists. The only one I don't like is Yeats. I always thought he was too fuckin' flowery, especially after the other night!" (Laughs at in-joke with Giovanni)

HS: I remember the first versions of the group,when John Peel was playing a lot of your songs. You always struck me as very much an extension of what Hendrix was starting to do when he died.

Phil: "Yeah, auld Eric Bell was a real Hendrix fanatic... had a Fender strat and everything... sounded fuckin' mad!"

HS: How did you feel about moving to London in the early days?
Phil: "It was 1972, and I just thought that London was a huge place."
HS: And do you still?
Phil: "No, it gets smaller and smaller. I know more people and more people know me."
HS: Do you remember what you thought you were trying to do back then?
Phil: "Anything but work, you know."
HS: You didn't have any massive plans to change the universe?
Phil: "No, no. They just gave us a recording contract and said 'Do you want to move to London?' And roight we did!"
HS: Was the scene very developed in London then?
Phil: "No! It was fuckin' worse than it is now!"
HS: And how bad is it now?
Phil: "BAAAAD!"
HS: Do you think that Ireland is a different set up from say, Birmingham or Manchester or Glasgow nowadays?
Phil: "I's different, y'know, but it's the same problem - you wanna make it in the music business, you have to go to London. London is the centre of the music..rock business. So there's no way you can live up in Newcastle and be huge in London, y'Know. Even The Beatles had to move to London, 'cos it's the centre."
HS: You seem to have been one of the blokes who, when '76 came around, adjusted more easily to the New Wave thing. I mean, you've been involved with two of The Sex Pistols in your Greedy Bastards group...
Phil: "It's just attitude, innit?"
HS: But a lot of the groups who were your contemporaries were very corrosive to the New Wave.
Phil: "And where are they now?.. Yeah, I think it was blown up out of all proportion, really. It was the same - musicians wanting to get up and play, that's all."
HS: How did you get involved with Steve Jones and Paul Cook?
Phil: "OH, Steve and Paul. We were asked to play a session for Johnny Thunders, for his solo album. They wanted me to play bass and they were on drums and guitar...and Johnny Thunders was so fuckin' smashed he fell over and we've never stopped laughing since! So We've always had a good laugh. They're nice fellas."
HS: Your solo album isn't exactly standard Lizzy fare.
Phil: "Well, last night I told the record company that I didn't want to do anymore solo albums... It came as a great surprise to them.
HS: (I bet!) Why?
Phil: "I'M just tired of it...felt fuckin' sick... I enjoyed doing it, just I don't enjoy promoting it."
HS: You didn't think that it was 'you'?
Phil: "Let's say that I've been seperated from the band when I didn't want to be."
HS: It's still very much Lizzy then?
Phil:"Yeah, right. Definitely."

Phil's telling the truth when he says that he doesn't want it to become 'Phil Lynott and Thin Lizzy', but he's still driving from the back seat; that's probably why he looks so comfortable. And he is, believe me. While others are running around fretting about this and that (and the taste of the action I got at the soundcheck was enough to confirm my opinions), Phil is sitting serenely at the centre, calm and making no effort at all. It's the luck of the Irish, missus, and who's to complain?

Live, Thin Lizzy are one of the best acts around. Don't ask me why, because they go in for the, by now, standard smoke bombs and dry ice, etc routine. You know, the sort of effects that make other groups look stupid and hackneyed. The only thing that I can put my finger on is Phil's presence in their act. He actually wants you to echo his singing during a live rendition of "Baby's Goin' Crazy", no way is he forcing out some long-rehearsed routine to give the audience its moneys worth.

I remember, though, that there were a dozen kids outside the stage door at the soundcheck, and the shitty roadies kept slamming the door shut in their faces as they tried, not to crash their way inside, but just peer in from outside the door. The kids were dancing around outside and the roadies seemed to be taking great pleaure in trying to spoil their fun. Not so good, you understand.

You could say that Phil doesn't care about that sort of thing and you might be right, but if he was always running around checking that everything was alright, then he couldn't also

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So don't go thinking that Phil Lynott has the 'power', and must be followed, adored and especially, looked to for guidance. He's just comfortably playing rock'n'roll, having a good time and not trying to impress too many people all at once. Like he says, "Hey, you, You've Got it made", and has had too, without, I may add, the kinds of responsibilities the likes of The Clash now find themselves involved with.

And finally, a little bit more interview:

Helter Skelter: I see that Snowy White collaborated with you on a couple of tracks off the new Lizzy album, 'Chinatown'.

Phil: "Ah, well, I was making so much money from songwriting royalties that I thought I'd better share some of it out!"

HS: OH YEAH!

Phil: "No, no. He just came up with some ideas, so he's writing away... taking some of the pressure off me."

HS: So he's obviously fitting in.

Phil: "Oh yeah. Like,it mightn't be instant, you know what I mean. You mightn't see it at first, but surely - if slowly - you'll see the guy develop into, like, a really strong member of Lizzy, because he's got real strong songwriting talents and he's being given room to blow.

"So once he gets a bit of speed going and gets used to the Lizzy supporters - and they get used to him - you'll see (and at this point he flamboyantly gestures) the BLOSSOMING of a young rising star!!

"He's always been very subdued, y'know, playing with Pink Floyd and Cliff Richard. And that's the last thing we are - subdued!"

HS: I've heard that someone is writing a biography on the band. When is that due out?

Phil: "OH yeah, the book. Harry Doherty (journalist with the hideous Melody Maker) has written a book on the on the band, but we keep breaking up every time we get to the last chapter. He's been writing it for about two years.

(Giovanni arrives with some soup and bread; Philip is none too pleased)

Phil: "WHAT NO FUCKIN' FISH AND CHIPS - Aw Jazuz!!!"

T.H. Bogart.

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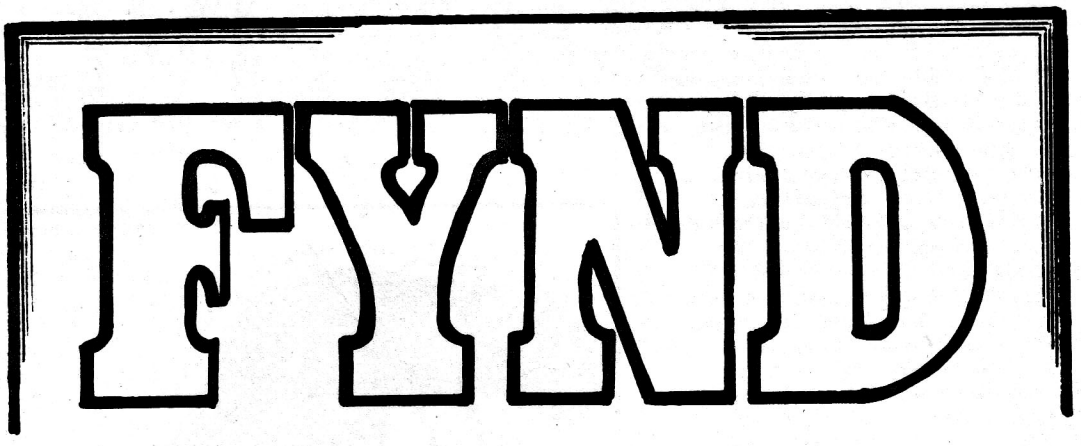

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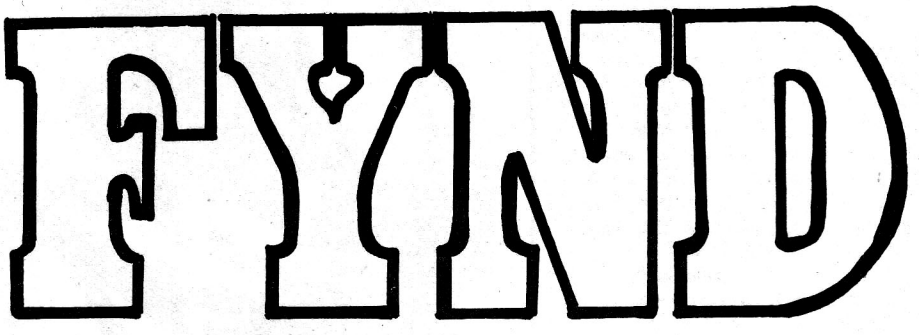

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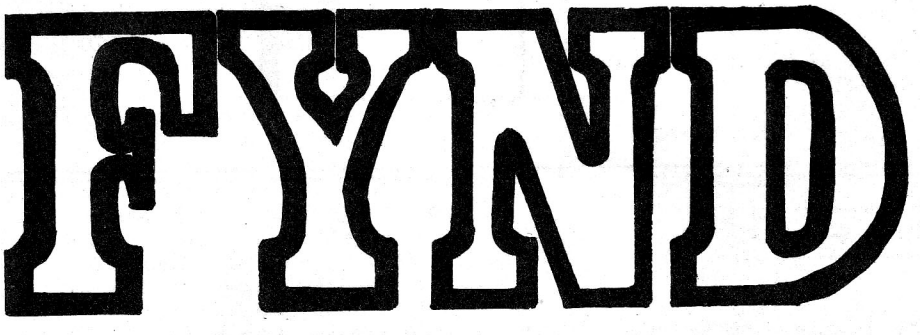

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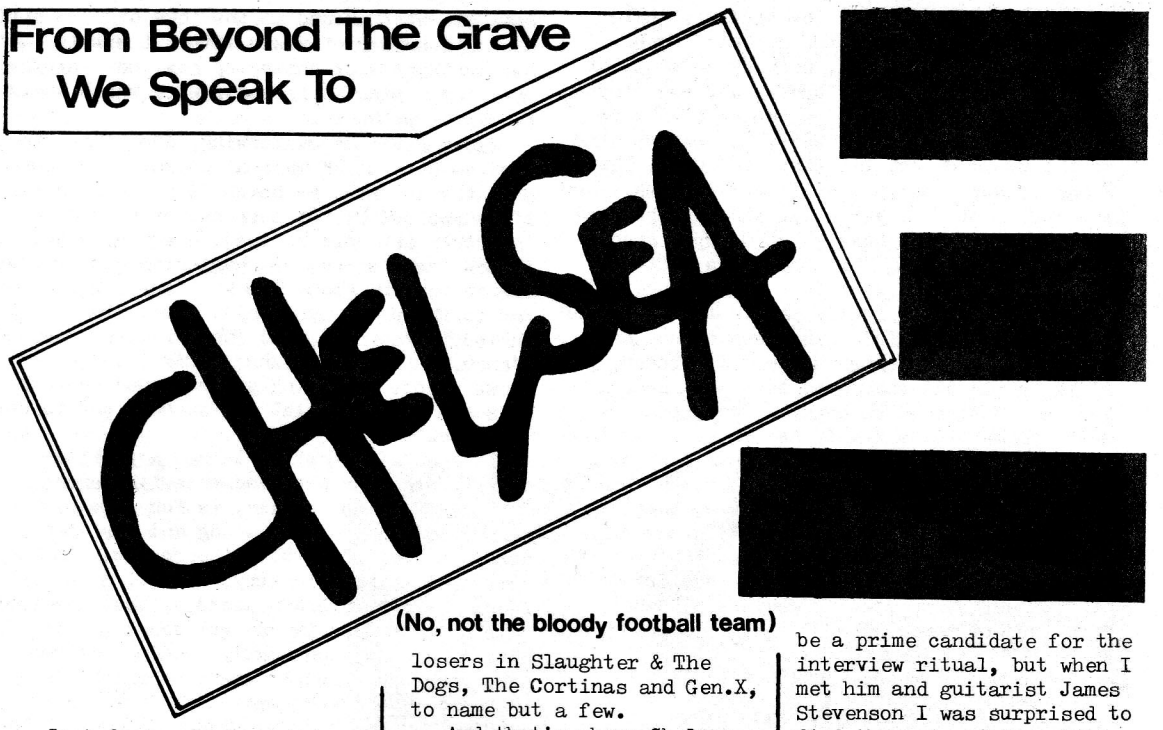

(No, not the bloody football team)

Just for a minute, cast your mind back to those halcyon days of 1976/77, and affectionately recall the apocalyptic mayhem which swept through the UK at that time, affecting kids located as far apart as Aberdeen and Cornwall, but centring itself in a shabby club in Covent Garden, The Roxy, where the likes of The Clash, The Jam, The Buzzcocks and The Damned first found an outlet for their not inconsiderable talents.

Soon, The Roxy became a regular haunt of the record company A&R leeches, and one by one the best - and worst - of the original Punk bands were tempted with massive cash advances. One by one the bands succumbed to the inevitable realities of the recording industry, an industry whose only interest in Punk was to make as much money from it as quickly as possible.

Blinded by avarice and in a state of unparalleled confusion, the companies waved their cheque books under the noses of anyone who had any vague connection with Punk, the more astute striking gold with the likes of The Pistols, Jam, Clash, Stranglers and Boomtown Rats; others, eighteen months later, discovering they had backed losers in Slaughter & The Dogs, The Cortinas and Gen.X, to name but a few.

And that's where Chelsea come in. Despite having the necessary credentials -i.e. regular Roxy favourites, successful independent single ('Right To Work'), outspoken lead vocalist - no record deal with a major company was forthcoming. This resulted in a period of inactivity for the band which, in turn, led to a slow but steady decline in their popularity.

It was this very question of 'what went wrong ?' that prompted me to seek an interview with the band recently. After all, they couldn't have planned things to turn out like this.

Could they?

The last time Chelsea were in Newcastle, they were supporting the moronic Dickies at the City Hall: the gig was prematurely curtailed by the City Hall management who pulled the plugs out on the band following Gene October's instruction to the audience to smash the place up. (October later informed me that what he had meant to say was 'let's all have a real good time tonight', but that his wording had been a trifle inaccurate. He also claimed that the band had received no payment for the gig.)

With that kind of reputation hanging over him, October would hardly seem to be a prime candidate for the interview ritual, but when I met him and guitarist James Stevenson I was surprised to find the pair of them mild-mannered to the point of timid. In fact, October spoke so quietly that I was continually having to check the cassette machine to make sure that it was picking up his pearls of wisdom with sufficient clarity!

After dispensing with the formalities of explaining who I was and why I wanted to interview the band, October asked me a barrage of questio questions about Helter Skelter, wanting to know how long the mag had been available, what the circulation was, what the availability of Chelsea's records was in Newcastle, etc

Satisfied that I wasn't from the Inland Revenue or the NME, he relaxed and I asked him how the tour had been going.

"It's been terrific, can't believe it! Great stuff! I really wasn't expecting anything as good as this. I really didn't think the kids were gonna turn out." He laughs nervously. "Maybe they've got nothing better to go and see!"

An innocent enough, break-the-ice sort of question, but the impression I got was that confidence hasn't been one of Chelsea's attributes of late. In a way this is understandable, especially when you

consider that musically the band are quite firmly there alongside the die-hard Punk bands such as U.K. Subs, Cockney Rejects, et all, and haven't really broken any new ground since they started. The emergence of a more thoughtful brand of New Wave, as demonstrated in the music of Joy Division, The Cure, The Human League - music a million miles away from the thrash of '76, yet still strongly related spiritually - must have given October good reason for thinking that Chelsea's fifteen minutes at the top were fast running out.

"I think what's really sad is that a lot of the really meaningful things about Punk have become cliches," comments James Stevenson, who looks barely old enough to have left school and yet is branded as being a 'has-been' by some. "Some of the really relevant things that were said at the beginning ARE still relevant. Unfortunately, because people have been saying these relevant things all the time, they've become cliches and I think that's a shame."

Before I can digest exactly what his point is, October breaks with a tirade against Mods.

"It just shows you," he whispers, "what with the Mod thing, the Mod thing is dead already!"

He looks delighted that that particular competition is out of the way.

"Because, like, it was commercialised so quickly, do you know what I mean?

"My feeling is that bands who were around at the beginning will still be around in another four years. Everything else will have gone, It'll be like The Stones, The Who, the [illegible] who were around in the '60s and are still around X number of years later. I simply can't see anything else coming up now, not unless they try a stab at flower-power, which would be pretty pathetic."

Takes a bit of swallowing, does that. As for the current UK musical climate, October sees the industry as being "wide open again. I'm surprised we got a second stab, y'know, 'cos this is, more or less, a second stab. Y'know there's fuck-all happening and here we are out on the road. The kids are turning out, and to the people who said, like, 'Don't buy Chelsea's records', and 'This record is crap', y'know, 'Don't go anywhere NEAR it, man' - those people are being proved wrong 'cos the kids ARE buying it AND are turning out to see the band."

So you think that we'll see a positive breakthrough for the band this time around?

"All it takes, really, is for some big record company to come along and say 'Look, here's a deal'," October informs me. "At the moment, I think it's very, like... A lot of people have been brainwashed by what the Press have written, and it can get on people's nerves, y'know, constantly reading rubbish about the band. People start to think 'IS there something wrong with the band?' It's very difficult. Until this thing, like, it's.. it's gonna take a bit longer for this thing to die down" - 'this thing' presumably being bad Press write-ups - "but, like, I think it will die down: I think the tide is beginning to turn."

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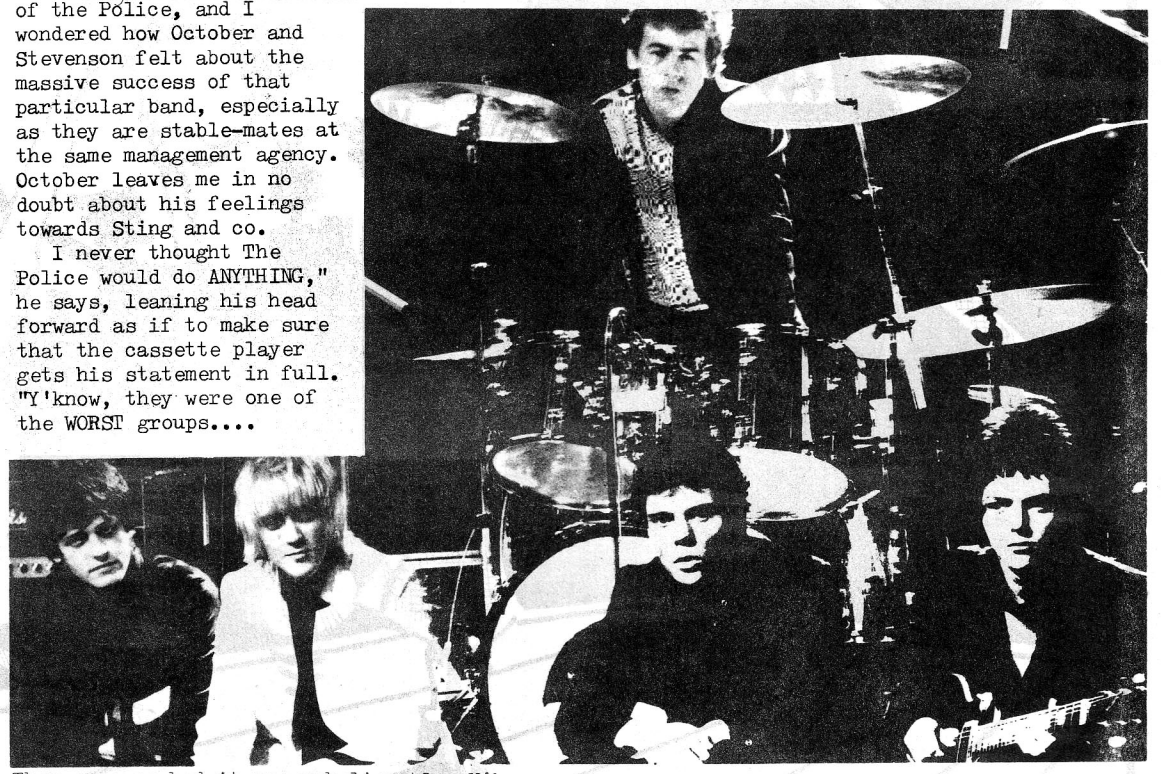
Our conversation zigzags around various topics, ranging from what ex-Sniffin' Glue editor Mark Perry is up to these days - October: "He does loads of things, y'know. He'll fuck off for two months and then, like, you'll see him in an £8 a day studio making tapes! He'll say 'This is what I'm doing', and it sounds like - well, I don't know what the fuck it sounds like - but he reckons it's something else. But that's Mark - maybe he's going a bit fuckin' barmy!" - to October's feelings about the music press: "I've talked about it so much, been into it so much, that it begins to bore me. You don't look to them to help you make it, you have to fuckin' help yourselves. And if they do give you anything, you're grateful."

During their heyday at The Roxy, support bands for Chelsea actually included the likes of the Police, and I wondered how October and Stevenson felt about the massive success of that particular band, especially as they are stable-mates at the same management agency. October leaves me in no doubt about his feelings towards Sting and co.

I never thought The Police would do ANYTHING," he says, leaning his head forward as if to make sure that the cassette player gets his statement in full. "Y'know, they were one of the WORST groups....



They were so bad it was unbelievable. Y'know, nothing to do with what was happening or anything."

"Basically, they were just bandwagoners," adds Stevenson. "Like, Stewart, who's Miles Copeland - who manages us - brother, just put a band together because he thought Punk was a good bandwagon to get on." He pauses and then concedes that "Sting did come up with a few good songs, mind you."

I ask if The Police ever returned the support gig favour to Chelsea, only to be answered with an assertive "No fuckin' chance" from October, who is beginning to look as if he'd rather be somewhere else than sitting here doing an interview.

One of the reasons for this, I would guess, is that although Helter Skelter may indeed be a fanzine, it doesn't automatically follow that we are obliged to be fanatical over every band or artist we feature, and October isn't at all sure that I'm going to write something nice about him.

Finally, I ask James Stevenson - who seems to be a very intelligent guy - why he thinks the band aren't a major force like a lot of their 1976 contemporaries now are, why Chelsea seem destined to remain on the fringes of the big time.

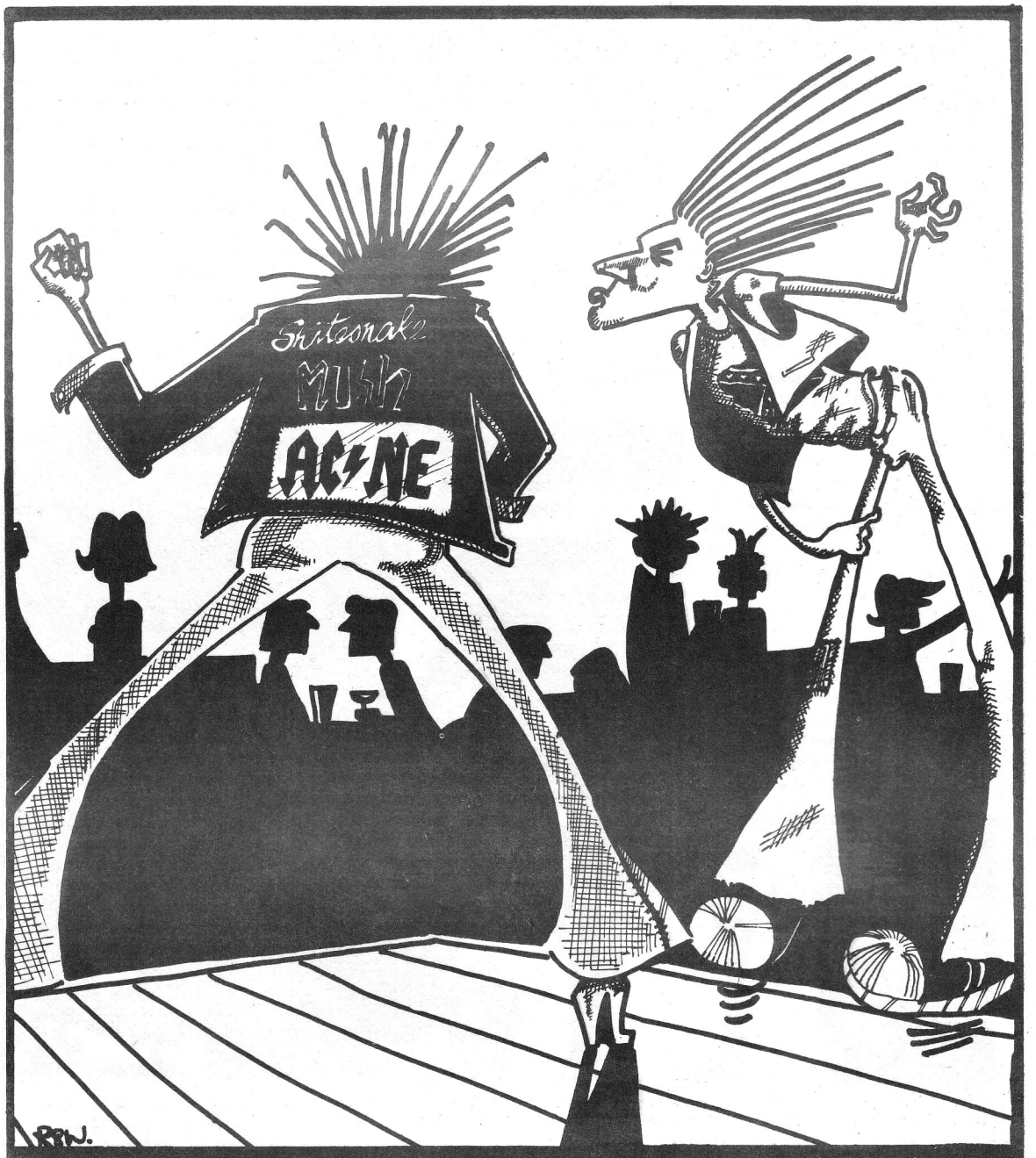
"I think the line-up problems we've had has had a lot to do with it," he answers, but without conviction or sincerity. It sounds more like an excuse than an analysis. "Me and Gene have been in the band since... how long is it?... since Billy Idol left. But.. uh... I think we get a lot of stick from the Music Press." Pause. "I don't know why. That's caused us a lot of problems. Really. Do You know what I mean?"

Mmmmmmmm...

I'd hate to think that this particular piece on Chelsea would fall into James Stevenson's 'having a go at us' category, or that it would put people off going to see them or buying their records. But, as I see it, the undeniable fact remains that in 1980 Chelsea are in danger of becoming a bit of an anachronism. They simply haven't been able to keep pace with the rapidly changing musical styles which have developed over the past couple of years. This fact became glaringly apparent when October about some of the new bands he'd seen recently, PiL in particular, and he told me, "When I first saw PiL - and I think they're finished now - I thought 'fuckin' hell!' They were SO powerful! It wasn't music as such, like what I'm doing...."

I bet they wish that The Roxy was still open.

Mal Armstrong.



HEAVY METAL:

How are we going to explain it away

when the Martians finally hit town ??

This article is concerned with Heavy Metal Music - yes, folks, the stuff all the kids like and all the pundits abhor.

I interviewed The Tygers Of Pan Tang at the City Hall recently in conjunction with this piece, and they appear a little later, but to begin with, I want to look at the history of Heavy Metal, with special attention being paid to those bands who have been particularly influential in the H.M. spectrum.

H.M. music has something like a ten year history - maybe right back to the fusion of Jack Bruce, Ginger Baker and good ol' Eric Clapton in Cream. Eric's fuzztone blues, Ginger's frenetic and typically over-played jazz drumming (the original Animal, Muppett fans) Jack's bass playing, but particularly his shouted, neo-sensitive lyrics. Not wishing to take over the persona of the ridiculous James Burke (he of TV's 'Connections' fame), I must explain some of the simpler reasons for the Cream sound.

Jim Marshall started making 100 Watt amplifiers which Eric started using, discovering to his delight that they were much louder than the regular A.C.30s; Ginger Baker, in turn, had to start beating harder to be heard on his tiddly little jazz drummer's kit; before the days of 10,000 Watt P.A. systems, vocalists had difficulty hearing themselves singing, so Jack shouted: thus, a new fusion music was born. My feelings are that Cream were the first popular heavy combo.

So we have Cream embarking on the twenty minute 'Spoonful' workout, for which they became so famous - or infamous - and, by Christ, people are STILL shouting out for "Steppin' Out" at Eric's concerts!

Cream took the jazz influence of John Coltrane and Miles Davis, and the blues influence of B.B.King and Buddy Guy, added their own ingredient X and came up with something that was fresh, original and tough which the public just couldn't blow their nose into and throw away. To try to clue you in to what I mean by today's media ridden standards, The Police - when I first saw them - struck me as being the new Cream: the way things have turned out, I'm not far from the mark. Cream opened up white rock to a wide audience; The Police seem to be opening up some white reggae doors - or maybe it's because they're both three-piece groups and that's all.

Free were considered a 'heavy' group when they first emerged, but they still had this exaggerated blues thing running through their work, an example of this being the old blues classic, 'Goin' Down Slow', which they covered on 'Tons Of Sobs'. They also consolidated some of the cliches that are now part and parcel of H.M. groups: Paul Rogers as the bare-chested singer and Paul Kossof as the wailing, grimacing guitarist being the most obvious examples.

Fortunately, Free were saved from the sort of oblivion that befell the likes of Blodwyn Pig and Iron Butterfly by their interesting and inventive songs and, more particularly, by their rhythm section (Simon Kirke and Andy Frazer) who were probably the first (and maybe the last) popular white heavies to have a bass and drum sound more akin to Motown and James Brown than the Thunder Squads spawned by Hendrix' experience etc.

More of the heavy blues were Led Zep, Jimi Hendrix and Tony McPhee, who all moved off at slightly different tangents to each other having established some kind of initial success. McPhee, funnily enough, was one of the first to establish a distinctly metallic sound, and later his songs and playing took on a strong dischordant and abrasive angle. He quite obviously took influence from Jimi Hendrix, who was always too funky to be branded as a teutonic guitar hero. I mean the guy was thrown out of Little Richard's band for dancing too much! He became a spectacle and a showman in a newly formed circus, and eventually found himself at the head of a music front built around a mystique of drugs and a new sense of awareness which, all too often, was distorted.

Led Zep blasted a lot of things aside with their totally original first album, and started to show the shape of things to come. Zep, and to an extent Deep Purple, made heavy music concerts into events of ever-growing size and importance to the ardent young rock fan. These groups, their personalities and songwriting styles, spawned some of the trademarks of what today has splintered off even further into H.M.

But these seemingly spontaneous expressions are still about two stages removed from today's idea of H.M. Even the words expressing the music have changed i.e. 'progressive' and then 'heavy' to describe the wave of groups which included Black Sabbath, Deep Purple and Uriah Heep who, like many at the time, started promisingly but soon fell into the treadmill of Big Name, Big Money and Big Time. These groups are probably the ones the new wave H.M. groups are based upon.

In the sixties, people bought progressive and heavy albums as some vague act of rebellion, which formed a youth clique that everyone wanted to get in on. In the seventies, people bought Heavy albums to be in with their friends, which should tell you that the scene was already dead and gone.

But hold on, folks, now we've got a new wave of H.M. fans who have got up and started their own groups for the sake of doing something that they really want to do. I applaud them for that effort alone.

So I interviewed the Tygers Of Pan Tang for you all - firstly, because they're a North East H.M. band and secondly, because they've recently broken into some REAL success and, Jesus, the North East needs some musical success stories at the moment.

Tygers of Pan Tang

The Tygers were on a short three-date stint when I caught up with them at Newcastle City Hall recently. Jess Cox is their vocalist, Rob Weir plays guitar, Brian Dick is the drummer, and Rocky Laws is bassist. The band hail from Whitley Bay and, in chatting to them, I learned that they formed about two years ago with the specific aim of playing H.M. music.

Their early gigs were at what they themselves describe as "the usual places: pubs clubs, anywhere really" until they were spotted at the proverbial high-school dance by one Dave Wood, erstwhile impressario of local recording studio Impulse in Wallsend. He invited them to his studio to record, the outcome being the band's debut single, 'Don't Touch Me there', on the local Neat Records label.

Helter Skelter: Did you have any inkling that your single would take off in the North East in the way it did?

Rob Weir: "We thought we'd be lucky to shift all of the initial one thousand copies!"

Jess Cox: "At the start we thought 'A thousand copies! How are we going to sell a thousand copies?' But we sold the first thousand in a week, and in the end it sold seven thousand on Neat Records and seven thousand on MCA."

The single was released on Neat Records on December 6th 1979, and with press publicity in Sounds around the same time, the Tygers found themselves in the enviable position of being telephoned by various record companies who all wanted to press money and contracts into their hand All this on the strength of a debut single which reached the dizzy heights of No.103 in the charts! (It also stayed in the top-ten of Sounds alternative chart for two months.)

They eventually signed for the U.S. based MCA Records, who took the single and redistributed it about eight weeks ago. The band informed me that they have been renegotiating their contract, now to include at least one album, and a new single, 'Rock'n'Roll Man', (fascinating title - Ed.) is in the shops now. They seem like a band who are going places.

HS: Have you changed your ideas about how you want to record and what matierial you want to record since the time of the first single?

Brian Dick: "Oh, we just did it" - the first single - "for the hell of it. We didn't realise what would happen."

Rob Weir: "We want to record in a really good studio" - the new single was recorded at Morgan Studios in Wales - "We've also got ourselves a good producer, Chris Tangeritus, who's produced Magnum, Girl and Gary Moore. Morgan Studios is his home ground, too. Don't worry though, it might be a better sound but it will always be Heavy Metal. We won't tone it down - it'll still be 'bang your head off the wall."

All of this reads like the last of the last of the Great British Success Stories.

HS: Do you like being lumped in as one of the cohorts of Heavy Metal?

Brian Dick : "No, but it's unavoidable really."

Jess Cox: "Let's face it, it if wasn't for Heavy Metal we wouldn't be here."

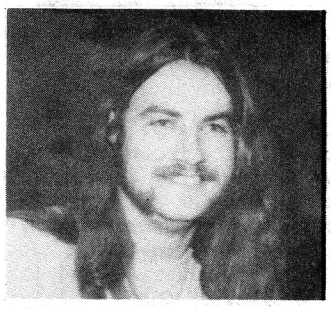
HS: Are you feeling any of the responsibilities yet?

Rob Weir: "If we don't do it, we don't make any money. 100% into it for everybody, it's got to be. Like, we've given up really well paid jobs for this..."

I then asked them about H.M. singles. It was never one of Led Zep's ploys to release singles and go on T.O.T.P. - in fact they went out of their way not to! Obviously, the emergence of independent record companies has gone a long way to gain popularity for the new H.M. bands who, like the Punks before them, have been snapped up by the comatose record companies because of initial successes with independent singles. With H.M. being a traditionally album-based style of music, I wondered how long the Tygers would continue to release singles, or was it their intention to turn their backs on this very immediate form of record?

Jess Cox: "Yeah, in the past it HAS been album based, but these new H.M. groups are bringing out successful singles. Also, the 12/13/14 year olds who were buying Punk a couple of years ago are buying H.M. now - they find the new groups more exciting.

It's in the Press, but it's also an underground movement, whereas you're swamped by Punk and Disco on the radio everyday and not much H.M. Yeah, I think it's kind of like a new underground for a lot of young kids who are just discovering music."



Rob(Weightwatchers)Weir.

It makes me wonder how they would answer the question of how they feel about their music being in the charts alongside the Nolan Sisters! Heavy Metal has been 'underground' and now it's becoming (and touch your Black Sabbath crosses at this point) POP music! I don't think that Jess Cox wants it to turn out that way though.

Jess Cox: "Well, when we go on stage, we dress like this" - he points to his Lewis Leather - "not satins and platform boots, and sing about 'the ashtrays of reality or something like that. It's all pretty basic. Half of it is tongue in cheek, the other is just ordinary lyrics... or 'tongue up your bum', or something. It's not 'fly me to the universe, I'm floating on Mars'. They're very much street lyrics."

True that. 'Don't Touch Me There' has Jess wanting to find a special girl who will really love him. How touching. And 'Burnin' Up' is concerned with Rob Weir's fetish for motorcycles. That's good enough for me. (You're very easy pleased then, Bogart - Ed.)

You must be aware of some of the half-baked (and, indeed full-baked) political ideas bandied about by various Punk-based groups. In my opinion, the thing that drives both punk AND H.M. is the same: frustration, and everything that goes with it. Punks found a way of expressing derision in the writing of paens to High-Rise living; H.M. seems to have the sadder edge with a kind of apathetic aggression, if such a state can exist. It doesn't seem to have anything to press itself against to act as a balance, therefore it reels around aimlessly, even haplessly.

The new H.M. groups rectify this only by their energy. When I asked the Tygers if they had any socio-political ideals, they seemed a little puzzled that someone should want to ask THEM that type of question.

Jess Cox: "Well, I mean... H.M. has always been a ... it's escapism... I mean, people don't want politics rammed down their throats all the time. Music is an entertainment: it's a relief from your mundane 9 till 5 job; go somewhere and enjoy yourself. You don't want to hear someone screaming about Margaret Thatcher being a twat all night... well, I don't."

"....OOMF....OOOOMMF..
...BOOM...BOOOOOOOOM!!"
— Jess Cox.

Rob Weir: "I think that 70% of the audience wouldn't appreciate a bloody message in the music."

HS: But you said earlier that you thought the Punks were turning to H.M. now...

Jess Cox: "But it's the music. Punk is just some sort of oomf..oooooommf..boom..booo oooooom! They just want to go and smash their heads against the wall."

HS: "So you don't think that the kids are listening to The Clash's lyrics, for example?

Brian Dick: "No, it's the image, exactly the same as the H.M. fans. They're just into the whole fantasy-type thing.. escapism."

Jess Cox: "It's just a different type of music. It's just that kids go to different concerts like Soul, Punk or H.M. But H.M. is the one that has survived. I suppose that speaks for itself: we're still here, the Punks aren't."

And so we have another H.M. band trying to gain wider recognition for their music. Some of the movement's main exponents are becoming ever more popular, especially in the last twelve months, with bands such as Motorhead, Scorpions, Saxon, Iron Maiden, Def Leppard and even local bands like the Tygers, Fist and Mythra breaking through into the big time.

The Punk explosion and its surprisingly articulate line of thought completely over-shadowed the inarticulate machinations of H.M. in the early days. In a way, it was a bit like one of those pre-match interviews featuring Muhammed Ali and Joe Frazier of a few years ago: Ali all talk, be it sense or nonsense; Frazier all 'umms' and 'ahhs' and 'I'll kill de bum' - as good a fighter as Ali, but without a clue why.

H.M. has become some sort of teutonic backlash. Lyrics of a fantasy nature, in some cases straight out of Tolkien, will be no good if the music is to become hugely popular; the 'I will bury my head in the sand is no good to anyone.

No, this isn't politics - it's more like survival!

Jess Cox:contemplating the ashtrays of reality maaan??.

Popular groups have no more of an important or unimportant role to play than their music or ideas can create. And so it's up to them

It's up to the groups I've just mentioned to get a grip and find out what the hell they're trying to do.

Just enjoying yourself isn't a good enough excuse anymore to be so wasteful in the austere eighties.

T.H. Bogart.

The Human League

Sheffield's Synth, Slide 'n Splice Stars Speak !!

I dunno why, but a lot of people I know are scared of the Human League. Most of the kids I've spoken to who don't like them have this preconceived idea that they're a bunch of ex-art school types standing knee deep in clouds of dry-ice, with lotsa black eye make-up and intoning notions of imminent apocalypse.

Well, that's a hod of manure 'cos the band that I saw at The Mayfair recently played a set of highly accessible, tuneful, danceable (!!!) songs, coupled with a dazzling barrage of projected slides which complemented the mood and feel of the songs perfectly And Phil Oakey and Adrian Wright, the band's vocalist and slidesman respectively, whom I chatted to earlier in the evening, were two of the most amiable and forthcoming blokes I've ever met.

When I asked them about these preconceived ideas, and about their TOTP appearance recently - promoting their great "Holiday '80" double-single showcase, they viewed such notions with a certain humour.

"People seem to either like it or not," said Phil. "I mean, some people have came up to me and said 'Saw you on TOTP and thought you were great', and others have said 'I know someone who bought your record before you were on TOTP and they've sold it since'.

"They often try to give us dry ice in various things we do, if we make films or anything, there's always some guy comes along with dry ice or a steam machine, and we spend three hours arguing with him over it: (imitates film director) 'Just a little bit to make the lights stand out. They're crazy!"

Although the band are working in the same sort of area as Gary Newman - and they both started out at about the same time - there's no hint of any jealousy or animosity between the two, even though Newman has made it (to these ears, anyway) with inferior material compared to what ground The Human League are covering.

"No, there's no jealousy. I always thought we were as commercial as Gary, we hoped to get in there first. Listening to his records and ours, I think they're good records, and we're getting along quite nicely," explained Phil.

Similarly, their relationship with Virgin, the band's record company, is an amicable one. Even though Branson's plans for World Domination by the mid-80's (Virgin credit cards, books, films, suppositories) have received a heavy amount of flak recently from various sections of the music press, particularly over the remains

of the late Sid Vicous' estate. The Human League, however have a fair amount of control over the packaging and advertising of their product.

"I think with The Sex Pistols, they can't believe what's going on," commented Phil. "And they're rubbing their hands with glee and

releasing everything they can, but I honestly don't believe they'd get behind something they didn't like. That can be a bad thing, because at one stage I think they had the wrong idea of what we were about. They thought we were going to be another Kraftwerk or something, and they were a bit surprised when they found out we weren't. Things were a little difficult for a while.

"We could have absolute total control if we wanted, but it gets to the stage where they say 'If you don't decide on the cover very quickly, we're going to have to put the album back so many weeks, and that's going to upset other schedules.' So we say 'OK' and that's a compromise."

I suppose one of the most striking things about the band onstage is their lack of conventional equipment. You won't see a Marshall Amp or a Gibson Les Paul get strangled while The Human League are playing (which is a real plus in these days of renewed activity in the H.M. arena.)

Instead, there's a couple of Revox tape machines and a couple of synthesizers. AND they don't have to suffer the indignities of not playing a gig 'cos the drummer doesn't turn up. But working with tapes can present a band with a different set of difficulties:

Phil: "It has its advantages and disadvantages. Adrian couldn't do what he does if it wasn't for the tapes, because it gets the timing down right, and he can run the slides properly because of that, so that's a big advantage.

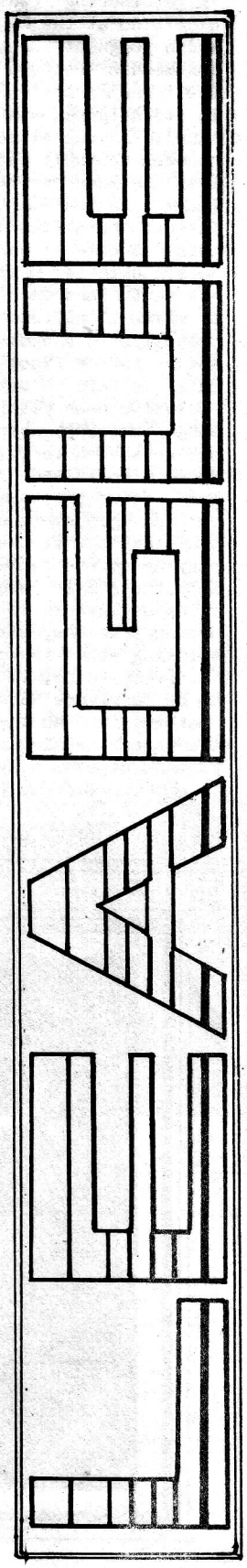
"But once we get out in a song we cant half make a mess of it. If someone's played something wrong with the tape, it can be a real embarrassment It doesn't happen all that often nowadays!"

Of course a problem that the band have faced on tour is having to play a set 'set', if you like, in that each gig is going to include the same songs in more or less the same order.

"We can swap the tapes around. I have been known to sit in filthy clubs on the floor splicing tapes together all afternoon and things, and then Adrian has to re-arrange his slides, but I don't think we can do that on this tour, it's just too big."

"Plus we don't have any days off," added Adrian.

The band are all big Gary Glitter fans, but there set also includes Iggy Pop's



The Human League

more over →

'Nightclubbing' (which they didn't do at the Mayfair) and a poignant version of Lou Reed's 'Perfect Day' from the 'Transformer' album which, in its original state was maudlin in the extreme, yet becomes achingly sad and touching when performed by the League. The band didn't feature the slides during this number - it was allowed to stand in its natural state - a taut, unadorned version of what, if performed properly, is a beautiful, sad song. As for "Rock'n'Roll", Phil has this to say about it:

"We've been playing the song since September 1978, and we wanted to give up doing "Rock'n'Roll" and "Nightclubbing", so we put them down on record. Then everyone says that that's what they're playing on the radio, so now it's the single 'single'. I think we gave in to Virgin a bit on that one, without thinking about it too hard.

"If anything, it was going to be 'Marianne' and 'Dancevision' as the main tracks on the single, but because sleeves take longer to make than records, you have to decide what's going on the record first. It didn't come off as well as it should have. We've got a better version of 'Marianne' now, which may be a single one day."

Talk of a 'Sheffield Scene' of rock bands is the source of not a little humour among the band.

Phil: "There is a bit of a one, but I don't see the point of putting things together like they do in the papers, it's strange. A lot of the thing with Sheffield was centred around one bloke who decided that he was gonna be the world's top journalist and he started pushing the Sheffield angle - largely to promote himself! He likes anything that's German, anything American that can't sell, like Chrome, anything that's not us! He's really blown it; if you get a good review from him it's worse than getting a bad one. He's an idiot!"

If you'd like to know the identity of the journalist in question, he shares the same name as the Gang Of Four's guitarist.

The band are aware of having an 'arty' following, a certain clique of fans, but rather than renounce them, they like them:

Phil: "I think that's alright, it's just that Art School kids seem to catch onto things a bit quicker. They're always looking for something new, and as soon as you become popular they'll drop you like a hot brick and move on. But that doesn't do you any harm, 'cos by that time your big enough not to need them. Look at Roxy Music."

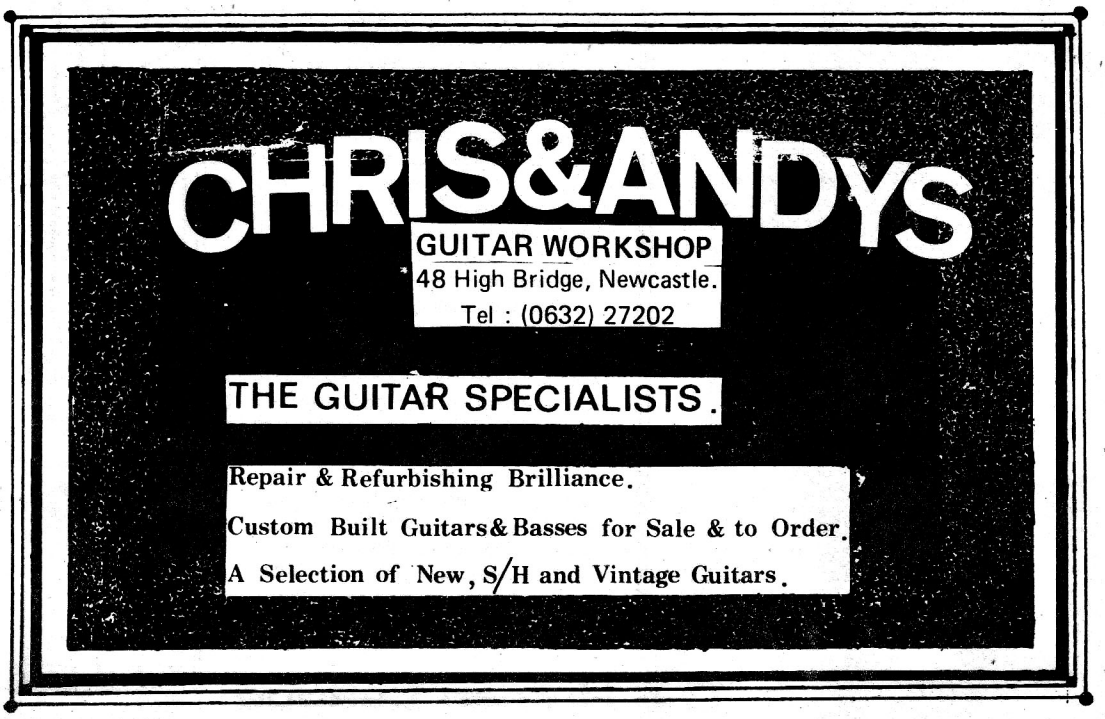
One thing the band will never get is a drummer.

"We wouldn't be The Human League if we had a drummer," stated Phil. "We don't want acoustic instruments; we've never used them in our lives. None of us can play anything but a synthesizer anyway, and some of us can't play them!"

So that's the Human League. All I can advise is that you invest in their records, their latest album, 'Travelogue', in particular, and hear one of the 80's genuinely stimulating and thought-provoking bands. Try and check them out live, too - you will be impressed.

Oh, and they told me not to mention Gerry Anderson, so I won't!

Allan Robinson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Sutherland Brothers and 1 Quiver, circa 1977. (L to R): Willie Wilson, Gavin Sutherland, and Iain Sutherland.

In this second 'Looking Back' feature I would like to take a look at the recording career of Iain and Gavin Sutherland who, over the past eight years, have produced some of the best pop music to have come out of this country and yet have never made any serious impact on the record sales market.

Trying to consider the factors why their music has been overlooked has been very difficult because they have not particularly suffered from any kind of lack of promotion from either Island Records, their first company, or, more recently, from CBS.

The lack of radio play, plus the mid-seventies New Wave rush - when a lot of kids had no time for any kind of laid-back music - would appear to have been major reasons. Also, they have never had the terrific stage presence or image that is sometimes needed to draw a large audience.

The first Sutherland Bros. album, simply entitled 'The Sutherland Bros. Band', was released in 1972 on Island Records. It was an excellent first effort and featured two absolutely classic tracks: the side one opener, 'The Pie', and side two's 'War Of The Roses'.

'The Pie' is a beautifully constructed song with a long acoustic intro, fine lyrics by Iain, and a tremendous chorus. It was, in fact, their first superb 'flop' single. The track is the only one on the album written by Iain, which is surprising, because he later became the main songwriting part of the duo.

'War Of The Roses' is a typical Gavin Sutherland song, featuring a much stronger rock influence.

Other outstanding tracks on the album include 'Midnight Avenue', a slow song with a certain latin flavour, and 'I was in chains', a folky kind of song which was always retained for live performances. The Sutherlands were, in their early days, classed by the Rock Media as a folk/rock band, their drawing of influences from Scottish folk music being very apparent on the first album.

The musicians on the first album were: Iain Sutherland - vocals, guitar, piano, harp; Gavin Sutherland - vocals, guitar, steel guitar; Kim Lundon - bass; Neil Hopwood - drums. The album was produced by ace Island producer, Muff Winwood.

My first exposure to the Sutherland Bros. came one drunken night in my youth at the Newcastle Mayfair, around the time of the release of their second album, 'Life boat', in 1972. They were playing as a duo plus supporting musicians at that time, and the strength of their songs made such an impression on me that the next day I went out and bought both their albums. Since then, none of their records has failed to please me.

'Lifeboat' contained a much wider range of music than the previous effort. Again, Muff Winwood produced but different and more varied session musicians were employed. These included John 'Rabbit' Bundrick (ex-Free) and John 'Hawk' Hawkins sharing keyboard duties, bassist Pat Donaldson, and Dave Mattacks (ex-Fairport Convention) on drums.

The writing was more evenly shared on this album, with five songs coming from each of the brothers, and their most well known song, 'Sailing', was included, although only on American copies. The song was composed by Gavin and was, of course, recorded a few years later by Rod Stewart who had phenominal success with it.

The song probably brought Gavin Sutherland more money in royalty fees than all of his other songs put together! Sailing' was, in fact, twice a hit in this country, although it wasn't quite so successful in the U.S.

Some of the writing on the album bears a certain Dylan influence, especially Ian's 'Lady Like You' and Gavin's 'Where Did We Go Wrong', but there are three songs which stand out on the U.K. issue of 'Lifeboat'.

Iain's 'Ireland' is, for me, the definitive song about the troubles of that country, and proved that the Sutherlands were capable of writing more than just love songs. The same can be said about Gavin's title track, a beautifully slow and tender track in which thoughts and dreams of the sea are expressed, excellently accompanied by John Hawkins on haunting harmonium. The last track on the album, 'Real Love' is perhaps the biggest indication of the type of music which was to come later from the Sutherlands: a pop/rock song with obvious commercial appeal.

There were still a lot of folk influences on the album but, basically, it was a musical progression from the first, and was probably the inspiration behind the decision to form a permanent band.

In December 1972, the Sutherland Bros. teamed up with a band called Quiver, who had already recorded two albums of their own and were looking for a new vocalist. The band line-up was: Iain - guitar, vocals; Gavin - guitar, vocals; Tim Renwick - lead guitar, vocals; Peter Wood - keyboard; Bruce Thomas - bass; Willie Wilson - drums.

Incredibly, the partnership was immediately successful with a minor hit single in America, 'I Don't Want To Love You', which led to a U.S. tour supporting Elton John.

The first album release from the amalgamation was 'Dream Kid' in early 1973, and was probably the hardest Sutherland Bros. album to get into. The lyrics were often complex and some of the melodies were not of the usual Sutherland style. The musicianship, however, was superb, especially Tim Renwick on guitar who's playing, although not fully developed on this album, emerged as one of the strongest aspects of the band's music.

Some of the songs did work extremely well, however, the title track, for instance, almost making it into the U.K. top thirty singles chart.

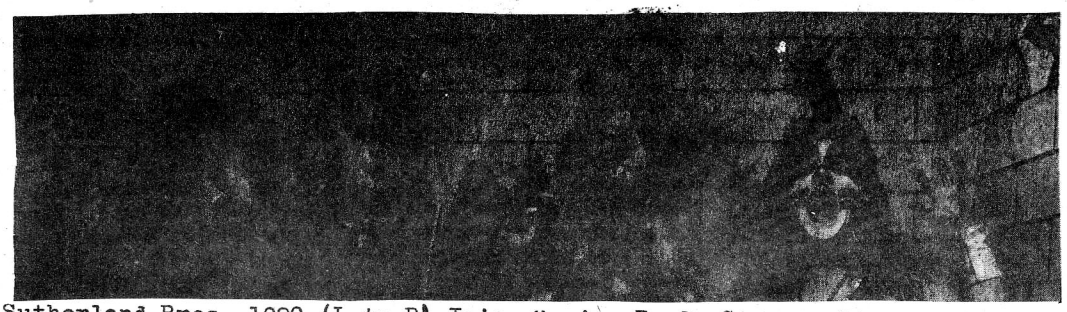
Of the other tracks on the album, Gavin composed two, 'Seagull/Lonely Love', one of the best songs on show, and 'Bad Loser'; all of the other songs were composed by Iain. Once again, the album was on Island Records and was produced by Muff Winwood.

A second U.S. tour followed but it was financially disastrous, and by the time they got around to touring Europe again, a disillusioned Bruce Thomas had quit the band. He was destined for success, however, as the bass player in Elvis Costello's backing band, The Attractions.

The next album, 'Beat Of The Street', released in 1974, was, in my opinion, the first complete Sutherland Bros.& Quiver work. From the opening track, Gavin's fast rocker, 'World In Action', you know the partnership is functioning perfectly. Iain's 'Saviour In The Rain', a delicate love song, was released as a single but was-yet again - another flop.

'Annie', though, an Iain Sutherland composition, was the classic cut on this album and will remain my all-time favourite Sutherland Bros. track. It's a song you can immediately relate to and soon find yourself singing along with and should have been released as a single but wasn't.

The Sutherland Brothers Band, 1972; l to r, Iain Sutherland, Gavin Sutherland, Kim Ludman, Neil Hopwood (From sleeve of 1st. album.)



Sutherland Bros. 1980.(L to R) Iain, Gavin, Paul, George, Ringo,
Are they trying to tell us something ?

Another excellent track is 'Hi Life Music', co-written by Gavin and Tim Renwick. Renwick's guitar work here is something special and the tone he uses so original. In fact, the guitar sound throughout the album complements the Sutherlands' vocals perfectly and went a long way in getting Renwick recognised as one of Britain's most creative and technically perfect guitarists.

Peter Woods' keyboards too were now an integral part of the band's sound, as was Willie Wilson's exact drumming Gavin, by the way, had taken over the vacant bassist spot.

'Beat Of The Street' is probably the earliest Sutherland's album still available in the shops, so there is still time for you to pick up on this superb record.

After the failure of 'Beat Of The Street' sales-wise, Island Records dropped them. In fact, they were on the verge of packing it in altogether when Nick Blackburn came to their rescue and took over their management.

Blackburn secured a new record deal with CBS and the change of companies seemed to add new life to the band; the next few years proved to be the most successful period to date in their career.

The first album for CBS was 'Reach For The Sky', released in November 1975 and produced by Howard and Ron Albert. By now the keyboard player, Peter Wood, had left the band, but this in no way inhibited the Sutherlands' music; in fact, the album was a real gem.

The first single release was Gavin's 'Ain't Too Proud', which featured some terrific pedal steel guitar from Pink Floyd's Dave Gilmour. Although an excellent single, it was yet another of those nearly-but-not-quite records as far as the charts went.

Amazingly, the next single to be taken from the album, 'Arms Of Mary', was an impressive success. It was in no way one of their better songs, but for some reason it sold well, finally reaching no.2 in the U.K. charts. At last it seemed that the Sutherland Bros. & Quiver had made that all-important breakthrough. Also, due to the success of the single, the 'Reach For The Sky' album entered into the top-thirty U.K. album chart.

The follow-up single to the hit was 'When The Train Comes', again written by Iain, though this time it was a much faster song than before, with plenty of beat and energy. It wasn't as successful as 'Arms Of Mary', but did manage to squeeze into the lower regions of the U.K. top-thirty.

CBS must have thought they were backing a winner with that initial sales success, and Island Records - especially Muff Winwood - must have been very envious. In an attempt to recoup some of their losses, Island put together a compilation album of previously released material called 'Sailing'. It is a good collection worth having if only for the singles which were not on previous U.K. albums.

The Sutherlands, riding on the crest of a wave at this time, set off in the autumn of 1976 on their first headlining tour of the U.K.

I caught a glimpse of them at Newcastle City Hall, where they played an outstanding set to a large audience who showed a great deal of enthusiasm towards the band. I can remember thinking then that the Sutherlands had finally arrived; at last their music seemed to be reaching a wide audience and, more imprtantly, their record sales were good.

A new album was released at this time, 'Slipstream', but, surprisingly, the single taken from it, 'Secrets', didn't fair too well. It was written by Iain with obvious top-thirty appeal in mind, and featured the Sutherland Bros. traditional catchychorus. Although getting a great deal of airplay, it didn't get much higher than about no.40 in the charts.

The album was again produced by Ron and Howard Albert, and although recorded in London, it was the first Sutherlands' album to be mixed abroad; in this case, Miami, Florida.

Again, it was a superb collection of songs and should have confirmed their ability to their new-found fans. A crucial mistake was made though, when Iain's 'Wild Love' wasn't released as a single. Despite being easily the most obvious choice on the album for single release, CBS failed to pick up on it and missed out on a winner. I believe it would have kept the Sutherlands in the charts, but with the failure of 'Secrets' and the subsequent failure of the next single, Iain's 'If I Could Have Your Loving' (pleasant enough but not a really strong choice of single), they didn't capitalise enough on the initial success that had been so hard to win.

It has often been suggested that the Sutherlands should concentrate solely on songwriting and leave the performance of their material to other artists, but the sheer brilliance of albums such as 'Slipstream' are perfect answers to that

critical view.

Following the disappointing sales of the album, matters worsened when Tim Renwick became unrestful in the group. Renwick wanted to expand from guitar hero to permanent songwriter within the band, and despite having written an instrumental on 'Slipstream', sadly, he quit the group in 1977. It was a massive blow to the Sutherlands, creating a gap which I feel even now has yet to be filled. This meant that from the original Quiver band only Willie Wilson was left.

Not to be deterred, a new album was soon recorded and released in September 1977. Called 'Down To Earth', a surprise guest on the album was Renwick, along with the excellent Mick Grabham (ex-Cochise and lately of Procul Harem) and Ray Flacke of Meal Ticket. Other session musicians included were John 'Rabbit' Bundrick (who was also on 'Lifeboat') on keyboards, along with Andy Pyle (ex-Kinks) and Rick Wills on bass.

A strange inclusion was that of the Shadows' Bruce Welch as producer. It was an impressive line up and, not surprisingly, the music was superb. The quality of the songs was of the highest Sutherland Bros. standard, and Bruce Welch's production went by almost unnoticed. It seems that no matter who produces the band, the sound remains the same: intimate and warm.

The opening track, Iain's 'Ice On The Fire', was released as a single, and this time it was the right choice. The song featured some beautifully fluent guitar work - presumably by Tim Renwick - and a tremendous vocal performance by Iain. Actually, the album contains some of Iain's most impressive songs, with several classic tracks being on show such as the rhythmic 'Dark Ships' and the funky 'Every Tear I Cry' (I hate to admit this but the latter track has been covered by none other than the Bay City Rollers!)

Gavin wrote only two solo tracks, 'Harbour Lights' - Yet another track influenced by the sea - and 'Fun Of The Farm', a particularly weird track. There are two co-compositions present and 'Oh Woman' was written by all three original group members.

All in all, the album was a super effort by the Sutherlands considering all their set-backs, and proved that their output could not be disturbed by changes in their line-up.

The final break with the Quiver logo came early in 1978. The lack of success seemed to be too much for drummer Willie Wilson and he decided to leave the band.

Instead of allowing this to be a killer blow, the Sutherlands headed for America where they tried out new studios, producers and musicians. Three tracks were recorded with producer Glen Spreen and some of the famed Los Angeles session men, amongst them a re-make of the classic from the first album, 'The Pie'.

In March 1978, a single was released, 'One More Night With You', a typically bubbling track that endorsed L.A. as a perfect centre of operations. This was followed by a fairly long absence from recording, and it was over a year before any new material surfaced.

In 1979 they sprang back into action. Remembering Glen Spreen's sympathetic production of 'One More Night With You', they hired him and his band of session men - which included Mike Baird, Bob Glaub and guitarist Ritchie Zito amongst others - and cut a new single, 'Easy Come, Easy Go', which was released in April 1979.

An album featuring eleven sparkling new songs followed. Called 'When The Night Comes Down', it was of the usual Sutherland Bros. perfection, and the addition of saxophone was a master-stroke by producer Spreen.

In the U.K. the album was barely reviewed by the music papers. In fact the only review I saw was in the Melody Maker, where about ten lines were devoted, saying "Who wants to hear the Sutherland Bros. wailing anymore?"

Well I did for one, and if that's all the constructive criticism a paper as popular as Melody Maker could offer, then their object as a music magazine is defunct. (Difficult to argue with that - Ed).

The album, in my opinion, is the Sutherlands most satisfying to date. Tracks like Iain's 'Dreams Of You' and the superb 'As Long As I've Got You', plus Gavin's 'First Love' and 'On The Rocks' are pure magic, showing the band are still at their peak.

Their vocals too seem to have blossomed even more, the harmonies pure and natural and showing beautiful control.

Undoubtedly, to these ageing ears anyway, the Sutherland Brothers have produced some of the best U.K. contemporary popular music over the last eight years, and have managed to survive where other artists have declined.

The long, hot summer of '76 - remember those lazy, peaceful days ? - was the Sutherlands' most successful period. As I'm writing this, the sun is pouring in through the window and has done so for a week or more. Are we in for another of those summers, just laying about on beaches and listening to the sound of the Sutherland Bros. music just drifting out of the radio by your side?
I hope so!

Mick Sheldon.

moon beat
A VIZ COMIC Cartoon
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MOONBEAT IS THAT CUDDLY LITTLE SPACE CRITTER WHO DWELLS UPON THE MOON. HE'S YOUR REGULAR THICK SOD!
ONE DAY MOONBEAT DECIDED TO GET HIP! "NEED SOME THREADS" Y'THOUGHT, DIDN'YA, Y'CUNT!
YIP!
THE LITTLE CHEESE FACE TODDLED ON DOWN TO "MOOCHO THE MOON TAILOR" FOR A FIT UP.
MOOCHO THE
OOH! GIMMEE GIMMEE!
MOON MOD COLLECTION
INSIDE THE STORE...
HAVE YOU GOT ANY MOD GEAR, JOHN?
MY LIFE ALREADY, I HAVE THE VERY THING!
MOON CHANGING FACILITIES
READY YET, SON? (ARF!)
NEARLY
TEE HEE!
GUFFAW SNIGGER!
NICE EH?
YUK YUK
MOONBEAT WASN'T TOO SURE...
ARE YOU SURE IT LOOKS OKAY MR MOOCHO?
ERM... BUT OF COURSE. AT 50 MOONBUCKS IT'S A REAL BARGAIN!
BUT HE ACTUALLY BOUGHT IT!!!
AH HA HA!! WHAT A DUMB, DUMB BASTARD!
ARF!
"NOW I'M A REAL MOD", HE THOUGHT!
BUT, LURKING NEARBY ON A BIG BATTLESHIP ARE A BUNCH OF VICIOUS ROCKONS. WOTCHA', MOONBEAT SON.
MOD SPOTTED ON PLANET MOON, JIMMY!
RIGHT OH! BLAST THE FUCKER WITH A BICYCLECHAIN TORPEDO!!!
YOU BET!
AND....
ZAP!
POOR GET. WILL HE DO ANY BETTER NEXT TIME. BUY THE NEXT ISSUE AND SEE, Y'ALL.

ALBUMS

Parker: Time For a Re-think?

Graham Parker & The Rumour — "The UP Escalator"

Graham Parker has been promising to make a big impact on the British record market for almost five years now, yet he's still searching for the real breakthrough that would put him in the first division of U.K. rock.

Certainly, Parker's music is as commercial as many of his contemporaries and with the superb Rumour backing him on all his albums, you would have thought he would have received more success than a few minor album chart placings and one hit single back in 1977.

Sadly, Bob Andrews, The Rumour's ace keyboard player is missing on this, Parker's sixth and first for Stiff, and that's a real shame. His departure really has seemed to have affected the sound: a sense of urgency, present on all Parker's previous efforts, has gone in certain places. This is surprising since such notable session musicians as the legendary Nicky Hopkins on piano, Danny Frederici (of the E Street band)on keyboards and Peter Wood (ex- Sutherland Bros - check 'Looking Back' feature in this issue) are used, but the album was recorded in New York with Jimmy Lovine at the desk, and perhaps that has something to do with it.

Don't get me wrong, I'm not going to start slamming this album - in fact, I really like it! - it's just that I approached it very apprehensively since the reviews I had seen almost hailed it as a classic. Wellllll.... it certainly doesn't compare with at least one Bruce Springsteen album or a number of Stones albums I have in my collection - both of whom have had significant influence on Parker's music.

Mind you, there are some great tracks present, none better than the first cut, 'No Holding Back'. If every song was up to the standard of that track then the album WOULD be a classic. The Rumour swing along in great style and the song is beautifully constructed, but the rhythm section does seem surprisingly dull.

'The Beating Of Another Heart' shows Parker at his strongest with slower vocals. A Springsteen influenced song if ever there was one, yet still Parker cuts through with his own style, making the track one of the best cuts on the album.

'Stupefaction', the first single to be taken from 'Escalator', has a tremendous guitar intro by the one and only Brinsley Schwarz (see 'Looking Back' in issue no.1). Actually, throughout the album, Brinsley is far too under-used for my liking, although everything he does play is technically perfect.

The current single, 'Love Without Greed' has a gorgeous chugging beat, but the song itself is none too hot. These choices as singles seem wrong to me; I feel that 'No Holding Back' could have got Parker back in the charts again.

Of the remaining tracks, 'Endless Night', with backing vocals from Springsteen himself, and 'Empty Lives', the only track that gives Brinsley full scope to demonstrate his guitar ability, are of much interest; tracks like 'Paralysed' and 'Manouvres' simply fail to hold attention.

In fact I would question Jimmy Lovine's production throughout the album. It's far too slick and doesn't contain the raw edge that Parker's music so badly needs. Bring back Nick Lowe!

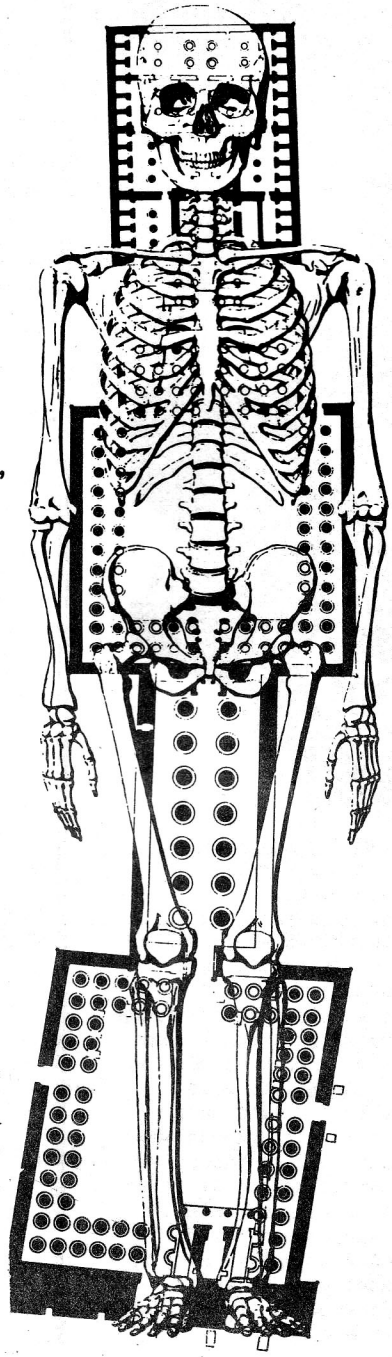
It seems that in his effort to reach a wider audience, Parker has forgotten some of the

CONTINUED ON NEXT PAGE

THE POP GROUP - WE ARE TIME (Y)

"IF ONLY SILENCE COULD SING.....
I FOUND IT WRITTEN ON YOUR SKIN"

How do you react to the Pop Group?How do you react to an axe in the brain?What do you do when you win the pools?You never know until it happens to you and even then.....CHANCE!CHANCE!CHANCE! This record,sorry,this document, is the (industrial) diamond in the coal,an example of the Pop Groups reverse logic,influenced by the wit of William Carlos Williams not the wisdom of Wittgenstein,musical adrenalin screaming/ streaming into your heart via the remnants of a oncewasabrain,all known sound is to be found on this album - this is the truth and I am NOT frightened of the truth, E.D.S.D./Every day something different,aPointilist heaven.Best till last.No stupid statements are needed to justify this record,this is not a tuppnyhappny review, this is life,this is MY life and it is NOT for sale!All real feeling is here,now,joy,fear,hope, disgust.The soft middle class run and hide,we stand and fight,simplicity is replaced by serendipity, understand or leave the room,the way out is through the door..... how come nobody uses it?This is the age of chance boy!Information explodes inside my heart.Speech is useless,spontaneous combustion - fire from heaven - "MUSIC INTO WORDS WON'T GO."This record is not pretentious no,no,no,.....it IS consistently fascinating.I love it.Pure sound strikes your skull,unnerves you,your teeth are jangled,My teeth are jangled,our minds are like playdoe and the Pop Group are HOT,they have evaporated into pure sound. The Pop Group have a sense of purpose,"SCIENCE HAS NO SOUL/ SCIENCE HASS NO CONSCIENCE/WE ARE NOT FUEL/ WE ARE NOT CONSEQUENCES/I WILL NOT LIVE IN AN ANGRY SILENCE/IMPERSONATING ANGELS/SHORT CUT TO HELL/UNSEEM INVISIBLE GHOSTS IN THE MACHINE. The Pop Group (the supreme Irony) are here to exgange ideas,the difference between this and every other record is that the listener has to give as much as he gets, The Pop Group are in control of their destinies,are you in control of yours? How much longer will you tolerate being called "kid"? Shit on the condescension the ink on this page is the spit in the eye of IPC seers,this is not a review this is an oath,a vow,if you want to know what the songs are like BUY the record don't just read about it,the Pop Group sound different to each listener,music by numbers,the gate to their heaven is open but is your heart?Their are people in this world shackled by their blinkered vision,the betteroffdead boys,the Penmaans,with lipsa curled and teeth aset.rusted rancid brains running in reverse,their foul breathed wasted words rotting the decaying stumps that once were used to bite but now can only suck,sneering at the hidden mystic,they are locked in the chains of their own self importance,the Pop Group hold the key to their/our freedom.The false prophets make me want to floppy boot stomp on their zitblitzed foetal faces, these vampires will wilt at the sight of the crucifix because their truth is running backwards caught in the negative slipstream of their self delusion/illusion GOD IS EVIL TO THE DEVIL YOU KNOW.



BUY WORK CONSUME DIE BUY WORK CONSUME DIE BUY WORK CONSUME DIE
pleasant dreams,
MARK INMONGER

G.P. CONTINUED!

basics, but let's not put the album down too much since, as I write this review, 'The Up Escalator has settled nicely into both the UK and US charts - and that's where Parker belongs.

Mick Sheldon

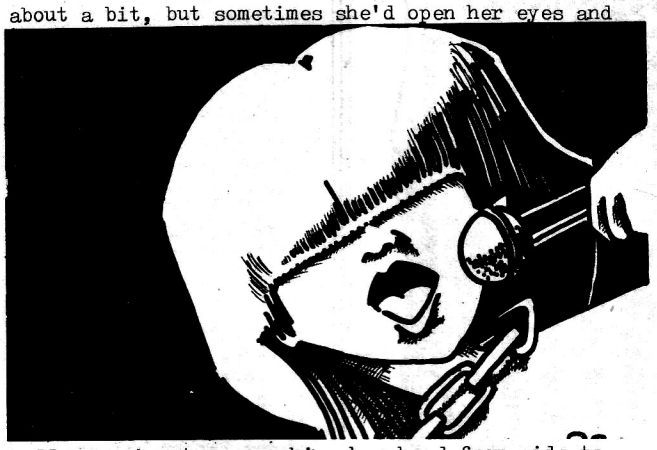
LIVE JIVE

Toyah
Newcastle Mayfair

This band've been getting more than their fair share of good press lately, though only the Good Lord knows why. Putting it simply, Toyah are probably the most appalling group I've ever seen. Toyah Wilcox herself seems to have acquired a certain New Wave credibility with her appearance in 'Jubilee' (sheer Tatsville City, Arizona), and the selection of Newcastle's walking museums, sorry, 'punk rockers', stood as proof.

But let's be honest, chaps, the heap of merde that Toyah-flung at us the other night was the kind of stuff that your older brother used to listen to, overtones of Yes, Blodwyn Pig even.

Vocally, Toyah was pitiful. She's got a very limited range, and tends to flesh her songs out with echoplexed yelps or bleats or squeaks, sounding at times like Kate Bush sitting on an icicle or an Angloid tuff-shit, but never like a person who believed in what she was singing about. She did dance about a bit, but sometimes she'd open her eyes and



pull a manic stare, cocking her head from side to side, which, with her multi-coloured hair, made her look more like Little Weed from The Flowerpot Men than one of the Charlie Manson Glee Club.

Toyah will never amount to anything more than a mess of catchy tunes and flaky instrumentals, because their music has no drama. (You'd think she'd know about drama, being an actress and all that!) It's just a plate of tepid blancmange - deeply unsatisfying and seemingly endless. Toyah herself just can't seem to project any feelings or emotions into what she is singing, her music has none of the cheap thrills soul-baring that, say, Marianne Faithfull's has; none of the element of other-worldly strangeness that Nico has, or had; not much of anything, in fact.

I'd like to end on an enthusiastic note, but I'm afraid I can't, not for the band or the audience. Plus I got bloody soaked on the way home. Bah! My advice to Toyah as an actress would be not to give up her day job; my advice to her band: give up your day job!!!

Allan Robinson.

Dancing Lessons
Kings Head

You want young bands? You've got young bands: Newcastle is full of them. DancingLessonsare one of the best examples: an average age of sixteen, a raw uncontaminated style, and a boat load of enthusiasm.

Taking all this into consideration, plus the fact that this was one of their first gigs, it was easy to see why the band were nervous and reluctant to start the night's entertainment. They tested the P.A., tuned up more than they needed to, and walked back and forth across the floor for what seemed an eternity until, eventually, the singer managed to organise the band enough to start the first number.

Their nervousness came over a lot stronger than their music, but after two or three numbers they did settle down.

The singer was the first to shake off his nervousness and give the audience a run for their money: though young in years and small in stature, he came over as large as life, bawling and screaming his lyrics into a mike stand which dwarfed him.

The rest of the band came over less dramatically. The keyboard player, hidden behind the P.A. throughout the set, weaved in and out of the songs with the usual electronic blurb, which worked well in parts, even though his musical immaturity did show.

The lead guitarist seemed over-awed by it all and stood fixed in the same position throughout. He played without changing the settings on his amp, and produced a sound which was interesting, belting out choppy chords and embellishing the songs with the odd concise lead break.

The bass and drums worked well, thumping along and holding everything together - which was quite a task as the keyboard player and guitarist repeatedly went off at a tangent.

The band were well received

by the sympathetic audience, who gave them a good round of applause after each song.

DancingLessonsdo not have a set style as yet and their music is basically hard to define but, to a certain extent, they are not unlike The Undertones, with an overall sound similar to Joy Division (in an amateurish sort of way). They are definitely destined for bigger things as long as they keep their heads and continue to plod along, and I'M sure we'll hear a lot more from them in the future.

(You've probably noticed the lack of information on band personnel. This is due to the fact that the band shot straight off after their set - it was way past their bedtime - before yours truly could have a banter with them!)

Colin Green.

Hot Snax
The Grip
Gulbenkian Studio

Half-way through The Grip's set it became palpably obvious that what I was watching was only half a band. You see, the Grip are a three piece band who really ought to be a four or five piece band and I'm not at all sure that they realise it. To survive in the '80s as a three piece you have to have a live sound which is designed to complement your material e.g. The Police (obvious choice) simply wouldn't have that all important sparseness in their sound if they were a six piece; on the other hand, Jeff Lynne's songs probably wouldnt have the same impact if there weren't 200 people or whatever it is in ELO.

As it is, The Grip have one or two potentially great songs which, unfortunately, don't sound half as good as they should because of this problem. Drummer Pete Reay is burdened with the bulk of the vocal duties, which weakens the rhythm section considerably and in a three piece that can be the kiss of death.

Musically, I don't suppose there's a lot of territory that hasn't been covered by bands using a guitar, bass and drums format, although Nick Vinnicombe's guitar playing was, at all times, inventive and tasteful.

Given six months to sort out their material and to decide on a more positive direction musically, The Grip could well be a force to be reckoned with - but not just yet.

Hot Snax, on the other hand have had more than their fair share of ups and downs in the past whilst they've sorted out their sound, so it's pleasing to report - on this showing anyway - that progress has been made and that they're almost ready for a stab at the top.

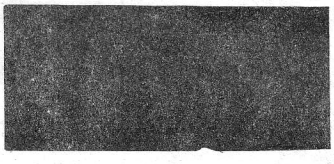
I say almost because there are still a number of infuriating anomalies to be dealt with, the biggest of these being the band's visual presentation which lacks sincerity and strength, guitarist/vocalist, Steve Foley, being the main culprit.

In virtually every other department, however, the band are excellent. The biting rhythm section of drummer Jimmy Bullock and bassist Marshall Hall lays a rock solid foundation of jagged rhythms for Foley and superb keyboard player Paul Newman - the North East's answer to Jerry Dammers? - to explore over and delve into, Foley's intelligent use of volume being particularly effective.

Outstanding songs included 'Thinking Of You','Main Attraction' and 'Eccentricity' but nothing fell much short of that very high standard.

Their new single should put them well on the road to bigger things, and if they can continue to churn out live performances of this calibre, then I for one can't see much stopping them being offered that - so far - elusive recording contract.

Mal Armstrong.



Wild Horses
Newcastle Poly.

Wild Horses: definitely a name for the future but, on the strength of this performance, success isn't just around the next corner.

After poor publicity for their UK tour, plus poor sales for their first album, I didn't expect a huge entourage to storm the Poly but the numbers who did turn out for the band could only be described as pitiful.

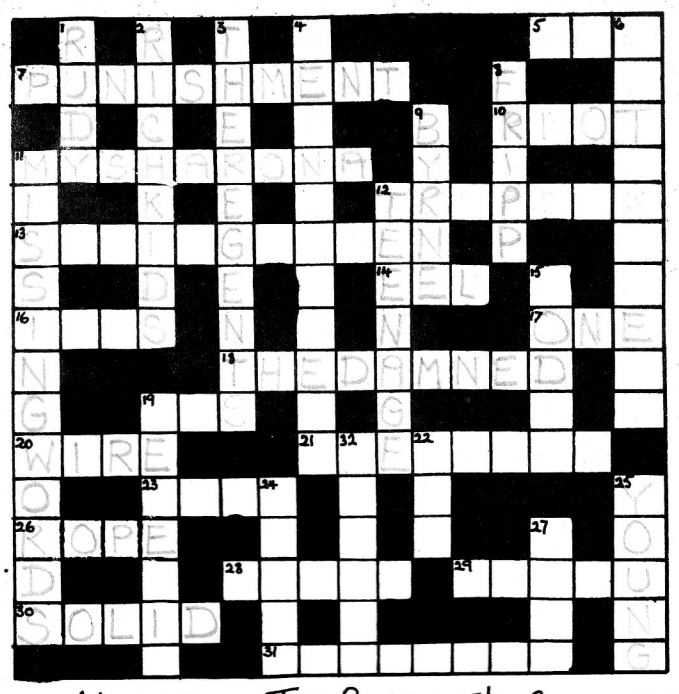
By the time Wild Horses came on stage, however, quite a few people had gathered in the main hall (the place had been virtually empty for the support band's spot) and they charged straight into several heart-pumpin' tunes. Guitarist, Brian Robertson's guitar playing was totally different to that on the LP, probably because he was completely pissed, and this allowed the band's other axeman, young Neil Carter, to steal the show in that department.

Amongst the better songs played were the Phil Lynott ballad 'Fly Away', and 'Nights On The Town', which brought out the best in everyone on stage.

As expected, Lizzy's Phil Lynott and Scott Gorham Joined the band on stage and partook in a very enjoyable rock'n'roll jam, which proved to be the highlight of the evening.

As long as Wild Horses can hold out and keep the leeches off their back, they'll do well; but I fear they'll always be under the shadow of Thin Lizzy.

Sam Blewitt.



ACROSS

5. PAGE'S COMBO.
7. SUFFERING LAUGHING ACADEMICS?
10. STRUMMER USED TO YELL FOR A WHITE ONE!
11. KNACK BIGGIE.
12. BEATLES ON A DAY OUTING?
13. THE WILD AND INNOCENT ONE.
14. --- PIE ISLAND.
16. DYLAN DESIRE TRACK.
17. THE NUMBER THEY ALL STRIVE FOR.
18. RAT'S RABBLE.
19. DUDGEON, THE PRODUCER
20. ARTISTS/WEIRDOS OF 'PINK FLAG' RENOWN.
21. CHRIS, SESSION MAN EXTRAORDINAIR
23. WHO'S WHAT?
26. GIVE IT TO 'EM, TOPPER!
28. 'LARK'S TONGUES IN ___' (KING CRIMSON CLASSIC)
29. LAUGHING LEN THE UNDERTAKERS PAL!
30. WILKO'S RIGID SENDERS.
31. WELL ARE THEY, GARY?

DOWN

1. SPECIALS GAVE HIM THE MESSAGE.
2. MATLOCK'S FLOPEROOS.
3. '17' ARISTOCRATS.
4. EARLY DE NIRO MOVIE.
6. ORIGINAL FLEETWOOD MACKER WHO FLIPPED HIS LID! (STARTED TO DIG GRAVES OR SUMMATT!)
8. BOB, THE GUITARIST'S GUITARIST.
9. DAVID, THE HEAD PSYCHO.
11. SELECTER FLOP (I THOUGHT IT WAS THEIR BEST!)
12. U.K. SUBS NONSENSE.
15. JESS, UK R+BER WHO STARTED OUT WITH BRONCO (OR SOMEBODY).
19. TURN THE BASTARD OFF AGAIN, IS MORE LIKE IT!
22. CRYING CREEP
24. MISTAKE! STING + CO RORY G'S FIRST COMBO!
25. MICK OR BRIAN OR JOHN PAUL
27. DANCE, DANCE, DANCE, VOMIT.
32. SEE 24's MISTAKE

JUST ENOUGH SPACE LEFT TO SAY THAT ISSUE 3 FEATURES WHA! HEAT, THE CLASH, AND A MASSIVE DOSSIER ON LOCAL BANDS. IF YOU WANNA BE FEATURED SEND A LETTER OR, BETTER STILL, A TAPE.

SINGLES

'Tyger' – Regina Richards and Red Hot (A+M)

This is definitely My 'Single of the Minute', 'Mammoth of the Month', or whatever you'd choose to call it. On first play, like I flipped, man! An amazingly catchy chorus starts off this masterpiece of unadulterated Pop Music — "He stood before me like a hunched up tiger / He gave me no chance but to be on fire" — a Boy meets Girl song with a punch!!

— "I went out with him more and more / It changed from what it was before / I let him do whatever he wanted" (what was that, luv!)

Yup, should get the old boys at the Youth Club bopping.

'Voodoo Cave' – Sabre Jets (Blueport)

Zombies, I hear you say. This single, as the title implies, is about Magic, although it failed to have a hypnotic effect upon me. There's a good strong sound coming from this Newcastle based band; Bongos, tenacious bass and Latin-American rhythms continue throughout. Normally, the Sabre Jets play Rock 'n' Roll, but this is a variation from their normal theme.

'Confessions' – The Flowers (Pop Aural)

Clashing cymbals, inaudible lyrics, moronic lead guitar and boring bass, my God!! What a noise!! I wonder what the world is coming to!! I would love to know what the female vocalist is confessing to, it just might make this single worth listening to for a second time. Never mind, at least it's very short. It's produced by Bob Last; any relation to James?

'Fever' – The Cramps (Illegal)

Another cover version of an old classic. Could it be Radiation Fever as opposed to Malaria or some old disease from these mutants of the music scene? The drummer plays rimshots throughout the track, and singer Lux Interior excites himself every now and then as he promises "The Cramps are gonna give you fever / Be it Farenheit or Centigrade."

The Grip Triple 'A' Side (Mrs Dixon Records)

Sounds like it was recorded in a bathroom. 'File it under me, Baby' features crashing cymbals, thumping bass line and inaudible guitar which come together (sometimes) to create a non-starter, but the catchy chorus line saves it from the cesspit. 'Pavement Princess' tends to drag, and the final track, 'Hole in the Wall', should be bricked up.

Colin Green

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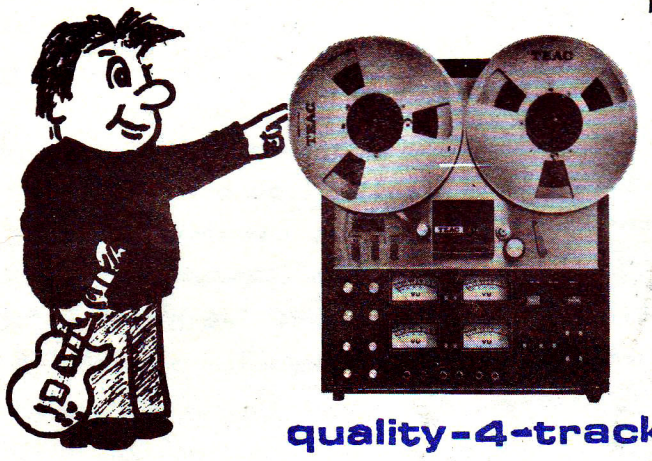

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